Private Water Wells

WARNING! As the owner of a privately-owned well, you should **NOT** assume that water from your well is safe for consumption. It is your responsibility to make sure that your well water is safe to drink. The only way to do this is to have your well regularly tested for bacteriological and chemical contaminants.

There are no regulations controlling water quality in private wells serving individual residences as there are for public water systems (public or privately owned utilities supplying water to 25 or more people or 15 service connections). In other words, there are no enforceable limits for contaminants and no requirements for regular testing. Private wells are often found in rural areas, where many activities such as onsite wastewater disposal can contaminate the ground water.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Recommendations

The EPA recommends that private well owners test their well water each year for such contaminants as Total Coliform Bacteria, Nitrates, as well as any other contaminants that may be of concern in your area. More frequent testing may be appropriate if you suspect a problem. EPA also suggests that you consider testing for pesticides, organic chemicals, and heavy metals before using it for the first time. Please refer to the EPA website on Private Drinking Water Wells at http://www.epa.gov/safewater/privatewells/faq.html

Other Contaminants

Water testing can be very expensive. It is important that you spend time to identify what other potential contaminants may be of concern. Please refer to the EPA website on Private Drinking Water Wells at http://www.epa.gov/safewater/privatewells/whatyoucando.html
for more helpful information. Be aware of what and how you use and dispose of household and garden chemicals. Also determine the location of nearby septic tanks or cesspools, and agricultural or industrial activities in the area. General information on known chemical contamination of ground water in Hawaii can also be found at the DOH website www.hawaii.gov/health/environmental/water/sdwb/conmaps/pdf/conmaps05.pdf

Laboratories

Local commercial laboratories can be found in the yellow pages of the telephone book under "Laboratories, Analytical." Whenever possible, utilize a laboratory that is certified or approved for the specific drinking water tests and carefully follow their instructions for collecting, storing, and transporting the samples. Just be sure to ask the lab to use EPA approved methods for drinking water analysis. A list of Drinking Water Testing Labs certified or approved by the Department of Health can be found at. As lab certification status changes constantly, confirm their status when you contact the lab. Please note that the list is limited to currently regulated contaminants in public water systems.

Results

Once the lab provides you with the test results, you will be in a better position to determine if your well water is safe to drink or what contaminant you need to treat for. Generally, you should compare the results with Federal (www.epa.gov/safewater/mcl.html) and State Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL) drinking water standards. Where your test results are greater than the State or Federal maximum contaminant levels, your well water should be considered as **unsafe** for consumption.